

**Exeter Economic Development Commission**

**April 07, 2015**

• **Call to Order**

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Clerk Jason Proulx called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office Building.

Members and Town staff present were: John Mueller, Selectman representative Dan Chartrand, Lizabeth MacDonald, Madeleine Hamel, Ian Smith, Brandon Stauber, Economic Development Director Darren Winham and Town Manager Russ Dean. Selectman Don Clement was also present.

Before proceeding with the posted agenda, Mr. Stauber asked for the floor and announced his resignation from the Commission citing personal concerns.

• **Approval of Minutes**

Referencing the minutes of the February 3, 2015 meeting, Mr. Chartrand asked the words attributed to him to not *publicize* the March meeting be changed to not *televise* as he strongly feels all meetings are open to the public. Ms. Hamel also commented on statements attributed to her did not actually reflect her comments in a discussion of a subcommittee for a Master Plan; all committees and subcommittee meetings are opened to the public. Agreeing to note this in the minutes, Mr. Chartrand moved to accept the February minutes with his amendment of the word change; seconded by Ms. MacDonald. Motion carried.

**3. Town updates/announcements**

• **Seacoast Business Expo - April 8, 2015**

Mr. Dean reported the Seacoast Business Expo, a joint venture with the SST Marketing students and the Chamber of Commerce, was set for Wednesday, April 8, at the Talbot Gym on Linden Street from 4 – 7 pm. The Commission does have a reserved table but there is the need for individuals to be representatives of the EEDC to greet the visitors and introduce the EEDC. There is prepared material on the established Economic Relief Zone (ERZ) program and the recently adopted Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) district for the Epping Road corridor also available for the visitors.

Members then volunteered to be present for the various time blocks to cover the exhibit time period.

• **Job Fair Recap –Town Hall, March 13<sup>th</sup>**

This is a Chamber of Commerce sponsored event held annually at the Exeter Town Hall. Mr. Schidlovsky, Chamber President, did say there were fewer attendees looking for jobs than at previous fairs but felt it was a great success

• **COAST Route 7.**

Mr. Dean reported there is a series of ongoing public meetings where COAST is considering the elimination of Route 7 that runs between Exeter and the Fox Run Mall. Presently, Greenland and Stratham are no longer contributing to the service although their communities are on this route.

There is a financial model where local funds are pooled allowing COAST to be eligible for

federal funds to sustain their operation. Without these two communities participating, there is the possibility of not receiving the federal funding.

From an economic development point, COAST is the only public transportation available in Exeter. Without this form of transportation the town loses the ability for some to commute along the route and attend functions. In spite of talking with the group during the winter on other variations of the service, the level of ridership is just not there for them to continue. Newmarket and Portsmouth, also on the route have other services serving their communities even though Newmarket is fully funding their assessment; but uncertain if that is to continue.

As to the future of COAST, Mr. Dean asked if it was something the EEDC might want to consider becoming involved in creating better visibility. The \$33,000 the Town contributes, some is from the General Fund and some from the Transportation Fund with its revenues coming from the surcharge on car registration.

Mr. Chartrand felt it was fair to say there was broad support for public transportation citing the favorable vote after an attempt to cut the funding for this line item at the recent Town Deliberative session. The discussion for retention (of the budgeted funds) was to help keep us at the table, knowing there was an ongoing discussion to eliminate or reconfigure Route 7.

Discussion continued of possible scenarios, potential funding sources and varying contributing factors. Mr. Winham then suggested inviting the COAST officials and possibly members of the economic development committee from Newmarket to a future EEDC meeting to see what types of marketing strategies could be applied to boost ridership; a collaboration of the two towns.

Mr. Dean re-stated the Route 7 as it stands today will most likely be shortened or eliminated in the short term but what can be done to bring back the service to Exeter. As requested, Mr. Dean agreed to reach out to both parties.

- **Housing Committee Representative**

Mr. Dean distributed a prepared handout outlining the charge for the Housing Advisory Committee as established by the Board of Selectmen; spearheaded by Selectwoman Nancy Belanger. With no current standing committee dedicated to housing issues, a group of eight (8) members are to be appointed by the BOS and serve as a clearing house for housing trends/statistics and also an advisory group with the intent of analyzing and developing strategies in long term housing issues.

A member of this Committee is to be an EEDC representative. Although not a member of the EEDC, Mr. Winham added he would most likely sit in on the meetings as staff, but added he felt this was a most important committee to the economic future of the Town. Current economic conditions are seeing an increasing demand in the interest of mixed use housing; felt the need to maintain our C zones.

Mr. Dean added with the recent increase in proposed and approved market rate housing units higher than in previous years there is the need to keep on top of this trend and will dovetail with

the need to update Chapters 1 and 2 of the Master Plan (Chapter 1 being land use and Chapter 2 housing). Basically, what do we have left and what are we going to do with it.

Members to this group are just being solicited at this time, but Mr. Mueller volunteered to be the EEDC representative to this advisory committee. With that, Mr. Chartrand made the motion for Mr. Mueller to be the EEDC representative to the Housing Advisory Committee; seconded by Ms. MacDonald. Motion carried.

Mr. Dean also referenced the distributed handout, Housing and School Enrollment in New Hampshire, prepared for the NH Housing Finance Authority dated June 2012. Mr. Dean felt it was very interesting and worth reading. The town is beginning to receive enrollment data from the SAU 16 including Exeter and will be comparing to the State trend as noted in the report.

- **Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP).**

Mr. Dean noted such a plan has had some discussion and didn't want to lose sight of it as well as the Economic Chapter for Master Plan. Such a plan will most likely be discussed at the BOS Goal setting session on Saturday, April 11, 2015. Mr. Winham continued the discussion as to what an EDSP would address as he has and would be writing such a plan. Basically it looks at the intricacies of the Town from an outside eye; what makes the community unique. It will outline the strengths and weakness of the town, resources the town has and how they are utilized, assets ignored or underutilized: a review from top to bottom. He intends to have draft by end of year and will be submitting updates in the coming months for members' review and comments.

Mr. Dean distributed the meeting notes from the second All Boards meeting of May 2014 and noted the comments made at that time and how many have been accomplished or on their way to be undertaken.

- **Master Plan (MP) Update**

Continuing the discussion on an ESP and who would be the author, contents etc., Mr. Dean noted the EEDC would host the meetings but direction comes from Planning Board via a State RSA. An Economic Development chapter for the MP is not a required component of a Master Plan and as such has not been included in current document, although there are various references to economic issues in other chapters; no cohesive chapter dedicated to Economic Development. Mr. Dean feels the EDSP will be working alongside with this dedicated subcommittee and there may be certain elements (from EDSP) that become incorporated into the PB document; Mr. Dean stated he felt the timing was right but there would be an effort as the PB dictates, reviews and adopts with a series of public meetings.

Ms. Hamel verified the EDSP would be more immediate and the MP Chapter would be more of where we would like to be (as a Town).

From the audience, Mr. Clement, the BOS representative to the Planning Board, stated he did not feel there's been a charge from the PB to author such as Chapter. Mr. Winham replied in his conversations with the Town Planner, Ms. von Aulock, he acknowledged the EEDC has talked of

such but is awaiting more direction. It was also noted the Commission is minus a Planning Board representative; efforts will be made to make a formal request for the PB to fill this vacancy. Having a PB rep would help with integration of an Economic Chapter with the updates being done on Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

#### **4. Discussion: Commission Ordinance Re-Draft**

Mr. Dean distributed a Memorandum to the BOS outlining the history of the EEDC. The sequence of votes, charges and resolutions goes back to 1968 and the adoption at Town meeting of the ordinance. This group is currently operating under that 1968 ordinance. From that came other economic components including the formation of a non-profit Exeter Development Commission and certified by the NH Secretary of State back in 1975. The memorandum contained the applicable legal documents including the by-laws of said group and correspondence from the group and financial information pertinent to their activity.

In essence this Commission is a combination of both; the 1968 ordinance and the voluntary not-for-profit group established in the 70's. No improprieties have occurred because of the not-for-profit status but Mr. Dean recommended a redraft to reestablish the EEDC guidelines to be clearer and more understandable.

Part of the task will be to look at the documents and comply/consolidate into something more workable. It is to be a topic at the next BOS meeting how does the ordinance get re-drafted and what and how is not-for profit group status gets resolved. This is a BOS ordinance and it is in their control but will need to be re-drafted before the three public readings/hearings before adoption. Mr. Dean, when questioned, did feel the BOS would be receptive to suggestions on contents if given suggestions; but ultimately their call.

Ms. MacDonald asked where the remaining funds (in EEDC treasury) would go if the not-for-profit is dissolved. After discussion it was suggested to contact the State Attorney General's Office of Trusts for guidance on the distribution of the monies.

As to how to proceed with the re-draft, Mr. Chartrand replied his recommendation (to the BOS) will be to have a full membership of 9 members and 3 ex-officio members be in place and then allow the group to give their recommendation of how the group should go forward. He did qualify his statement as that will be his recommendation but unsure how conversation will go. It was noted, the group is minus one member with Mr. Stauber's resignation and lacking a PB representative. When asked for a consensus from the members present if that position was acceptable, members agreed with that recommendation.

#### **5. Discussion: 2015 Meeting schedule and Time**

Mr. Dean stated a member was willing to stay on with the Commission if the meeting time could return to an AM meeting time. Mr. Chartrand expressed his preference for a morning meeting as it best accommodated his business commitments. After other members weighed in it was agreed to the new revised schedule.

Mr. Chartrand motioned to move the EEDC meetings to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month with a start time of 8:30 AM; seconded by Ms. Hamel. Motion carried.

**May 12, 2015 at 8:30 AM will be the next scheduled EEDC meeting**

## 6. New Business

Mr. Mueller suggested reaching out to the Rockingham Planning Commission to come to a future meeting to discuss their perspective on economic issues. Mr. Winham agreed to do so.

Mr. Dean announced a planned Economic Forum for June 3, 2015 at 9:00 AM in collaboration with the Chamber and the Newmarket Business Association. The program is to be at the Mills in Newmarket and will include discussions from businesses that have used the 79-E and TIF programs and their experiences doing so. He noted although 79-E was adopted by the town, there is still the need to adopt a policy for the BOS to follow when an application is made to apply for the benefits of the provision.

It was verified because the Town is a member of the Chamber of Commerce EEDC members could go to Chamber sponsored events as Chamber members and receive member rates. Mr. Dean felt it was very beneficial for EEDC members to attain said functions and if any wish to do so, contact his office administrative assistant and she will make any arrangements if needed. He might ask Ms. Riffle to make up a calendar of upcoming events and then perhaps members could decide amongst themselves who can/will attend.

Mr. Winham, although not on agenda did report on the possible funding for a traffic light and turning lane on Epping Road by the proposed road going into the Carlisle property (around Continental Drive).

Also, the group The Exeter Arts and Music (TEAM) are putting together a downtown experience every Friday starting in May at 4 pm to include art openings, music, beer and wine tasting ; all under the direction of Scott Ruffner.

Mr. Dean reiterated again the busy schedule for Town projects set to begin/finish throughout the summer and early fall. Including but not limited to the downtown sidewalk project, groundwater treatment plant coming on line, paving of Water St. and Portsmouth Ave., Great Dam removal and several other Public Works projects

With no further business, Mr. Chartrand motion to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Hamel.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub

Recording Secretary